

## FY16 REPORT FOR VETERANS SERVICES

In FY16, The Dukes County Veterans Services Department handled 163 cases, including financial and medical assistance. The total amount expended on veteran's assistance was \$117,768.28. We expect 75% of this money to be reimbursed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This year \$81,495.93 was reimbursed for last year's services to veterans and their dependents under the provisions of Massachusetts General Law Chapter 115, as amended. The amount received from Federal VA expenditures through pensions and compensations was \$1,441,378.00

We lost 14 veterans this past fiscal year. All were buried with Military Honors and with a representative from the Veterans Services Office and the Veterans of Martha's Vineyard present. All veteran's graves were decorated with flags per MGL 108 CMR 13:03. Thank you to all town Veterans Graves Officers for their assistance.

Veterans participated in one parade this past fiscal year: Fourth of July. Memorial Day and Veterans Day were rained out but the ceremonies were held inside. Our guest speaker for Memorial Day was Senior Chief Boatswains Mate Robert Riemer, Officer in Charge of Coast Guard Station Menemsha. This is the 6<sup>th</sup> year that we have been recognized by the Veterans Administration as a National Site for Veterans Day.

The Friday before Memorial Day saw island veterans at the Oak Bluffs School for their community meeting honoring veterans. Island veterans also participated in the Tisbury School march to sea.

Veterans participated in the Wreaths Across America Program sponsored by Worcester Wreath Company, which has been decorating wreaths on graves at Arlington National Cemetery for 23 years. Seven ceremonial wreaths were placed to remember those who served, honor their sacrifices, and teach our younger generations about the high price of our freedoms. Specially made wreaths for Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, Merchant Marines and POW/MIA were placed on memorials during a unique ceremony. This year we had our ceremony a day early to include the students from the Tisbury School. American Legion Post 257 in Vineyard Haven conducts this ceremony at Oak Grove Cemetery at the Directory for the Avenue of Flags.

Dr. Monte Vanbeber from VA Clinic in Hyannis is still coming to the island to see veterans once a month. The last figures were that we had 195 veterans registered for VA Health Care.

It has been one year since I became a SHINE Counselor. I feel that this has been a help to my clients and the community. SHINE stands for Serving the Health Insurance needs of everyone.

I also work with M.V. Community Services Veterans Program. This past year we have had a cookout for veterans and their families and started the Island Veterans Discount

Card Program. This Program is possible through a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Veterans Services.

I would like to thank the membership of the American Legion Post 257 in Tisbury for the use of their space at Seamen's Bethel Annex for the satellite Veterans Office. We also thank them for the use of their hall for veteran's activities.

I continue to write every month on veterans benefits for the 55 Plus Times, go to veterans organizational meetings, attend training with the Department of Veterans Services. As of this date we have two island soldiers serving in Afghanistan and have numerous others serving in the U.S. and around the world. If you know of someone serving please call my office with the address.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jo Ann Murphy  
Director of Veterans Services